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SUBJECT: DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY KRAMER'S MEETING IN
BERLIN ON BELARUSIAN SANCTIONS

Classified By: DAS DAVID KRAMER FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

¶11. (C) (Summary) During his visit to Berlin on April 11, Deputy Assistant Secretary David Kramer met with Rolf Nikel, Deputy Director General for Foreign Affairs, Security Policy, and Global Issues at the Chancellery, and Rolf Welberts, Office Director for Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova and the Commonwealth of Independent States at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other German officials. DAS Kramer described the purpose of his trip was to engage key European capitals on coordinating well calibrated sanctions to slowly increase the pressure against the Belarusian regime. Nikel and Welberts agreed unity was paramount and while financial sanctions might not have a large monetary impact their symbolic value was very important. All parties also agreed that Russia was not being very helpful and was unlikely to change its behavior. (End Summary)

Nikel, Chancellery

¶12. (C) DAS Kramer; accompanied by EUR/UMB's Alan Purcell and OFAC's Jennifer Fowler, applauded German and EU efforts on the recently announced visa ban list. He said the U.S. is taking a two pronged approach to Belarus. The first prong is to support civil society, NGO's, the democratic opposition and the flow of information inside Belarus; and the second prong includes punitive targeted sanctions against members of the regime. Kramer stated that the initial U.S. visa ban list would include about 50 names, but the list would remain open and further names could be added at any time. He believed the combination of the visa ban and sanctions would have a psychological effect of isolating those on the list and causing others in the regime to worry if they are next. Treasury OFAC official Jennifer Fowler described the structure of U.S. targeted sanctions programs, saying a program for Belarus could be similar to the sanction regime used against Zimbabwe by both the U.S. and EU. She added that while it is difficult to determine the amount of regime leaders' assets in the U.S. financial system, imposing sanctions would cause disruptions for those on the list and would also raise the risk and cost of doing business for the targeted individuals.

¶13. (C) Nikel agreed that the proposed sanctions may not have a large material effect on the Belarusian regime, but would have a large symbolic effect. Nikel thought the subject of sanctions would be reviewed at the EU's next General Affairs and External Relations meeting on May 15, and no action was likely before this meeting. Nikel said that Alexander Milinkevich, main opposition candidate in the

recent presidential election, stated his opposition to blanket economic sanctions on Belarus as these would harm the people but he spoke favorably of the proposed targeted sanctions. Nikel also passed along that while Milinkevich has been positively received in Berlin, Alexander Kozulin, another opposition presidential candidate, did not make a very good impression during his visit.

¶4. (C) Kramer commented that Russia's strong support for Lukashenko and blaming the opposition for the recent violence in Minsk were disappointing. Nikel agreed that Russia has not been very helpful on Belarus, but we needed to keep working with them since Russia is probably the only country that could have a major impact on the Belarusian regime. In the run-up to the G8 summit, Nikel thought the Russians might become more accommodating to the West on a number of issues but Belarus was unlikely to be included on this list. Nikel speculated that the Belarusian regime's antipathy towards the West was a key reason for Russia's continued strong support. Both Nikel and Kramer agreed that Ukrainian President Yushchenko's planned meeting with Lukashenko for the Chernobyl anniversary was not a good idea and both governments had demarched the Ukrainians on this issue.

Welberts, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

¶5. (C) DAS Kramer opened by saying he wanted to touch base with key European capitals on a coordinated approach to Belarus and explain Washington's dual track approach of engaging the civil society while implementing targeted punitive measures against the regime. Kramer stated that it was very important that the U.S. and EU stay united on Belarus. Fowler explained that initially the sanctions could be limited to a small number of individuals; however, the program could include the authority to designate additional

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individuals or entities at a later date to improve the effectiveness of the sanctions against targeted individuals. Welberts stated that while he supported sanctions, they would largely be symbolic since Belarus had few assets in Germany or in the EU. Welberts relayed that the Belarusian Ambassador to Germany seemed far more concerned with the possible names on the visa ban list than with the financial sanctions.

¶6. (C) Michael Kindsgrab, Counselor for EU External Relations at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, explained that the EU sanctions process was not as flexible as the U.S. procedure. The EU needed first to create a common position among the 25 members and then the Commission needed to create a regulation based on this position which must then be approved by the Council. Kindsgrab thought that the Commission could have the regulatory framework for sanctions ready by May. The actual names on the list would be a political decision by the Council; however, the current common position only mentions individuals. The inclusion of entities would require a new position and regulation according to Kindsgrab. Further, humanitarian exceptions would also require additional work since they were not possible under the current framework.

¶7. (C) Welberts thought Russia's recent announcement that it would stop subsidizing gas deliveries to Belarus was a ploy to help bring about the state union between Russia and Belarus. Welberts said that Milinkevich shared this interpretation and appealed to the EU to state its opposition to such a union unless the Belarusian people freely voted for it. While Welberts thought Lukashenko remained in control, the combined pressure from the West and Russia had clearly surprised him. Regine Hess, Belarus desk officer at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, stated that Lukashenko's control is probably not complete because his administration does not always strictly follow his orders and occasionally softens the implementation of his orders.

¶8. (U) DAS Kramer cleared this message.
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